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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 008638

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/NGA, NEA/EX, EUR/SE, CA/PPT, DS/ITA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [OTRA](#) [ASEC](#) [AFIN](#) [CPAS](#) [AMGT](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRAQ: REQUEST FOR DEPARTMENT TO GRANT
AUTHORIZATION FOR ONW POLAD TO ACCOMPANY CODEL

REF: STATE 241093

(U) Classified by Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Deutsch.
Reasons 1.5
a-d.

1. (U) This is an action request for NEA/NGA, NEA/EX and
EUR/SE. See paras 3-5.

SUMMARY

2. (S/NOFORN) Embassy understands that Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Senator Biden (D-DE), Senator Hagel (R-NE), three SFRC professional staff members and two military escorts (Codel Biden) desire to travel to Turkey and to Salahuddin in northern Iraq December 4-6 (reftel). The Codel wishes to travel to Turkey via military aircraft and then travel over land into northern Iraq via Turkey -- all of which require GOT approval. The Embassy alerted the MFA to the proposed visit during a November 25 meeting and requested GOT approval. We also alerted the MFA that the USG believes that Operation Northern Watch (ONW) POLAD Jonathan Cohen should accompany the Codel during its visit to northern Iraq. The MFA responded positively to the Codel's request to enter/exit northern Iraq from Turkey, but said that, due to the Ramadan holiday, appropriate Turkish government officials would not be available to meet with the Codel December 6 in Ankara upon their return from northern Iraq. Embassy will provide a more complete report of Burcuoglu's response to the Codel's request to travel to northern Iraq via Turkey septel.

ACTION REQUEST

3. (S/NOFORN) For NEA/NGA and EUR/SE: Embassy requests that the Department authorize ONW POLAD to accompany the Codel on the visit. As the USG's officer in the field, the ONW POLAD has a firm grasp and understanding of not only the terrain and the personalities in northern Iraq, but also the Turkish position on northern Iraq, and therefore is well placed to support the Senators' visit.

4. (S/NOFORN) For NEA/EX: We understand that NEA will provide funding for ONW POLAD costs on such trips to northern Iraq. We currently estimate trip costs for ONW POLAD will total between USD 850 and USD 1000, including USD 650 in driver and vehicle costs for Consulate Adana. This estimate does not include danger pay or any per diem costs inside northern Iraq. (Note: most, if not all meal, lodging and transport expenses inside the north will be paid by hosts. end note.) Please provide fiscal data via classified cable slugged Ankara for PMA/Cohen.

5. (C) For CA/PPT: We understand no passport validations are necessary for this type of official USG trip. If this is incorrect, please advise.

NOTIFYING THE TURKS

6. (S/NOFORN) During a November 25 meeting with MFA DG for Middle Eastern Affairs Burcuoglu on another issue, DCM said that Codel Biden wanted to travel to northern Iraq December 4-5 and requested GOT approval for the visit. DCM also alerted Burcuoglu that the USG believed it was necessary for ONW POLAD to accompany the Codel. Burcuoglu said that he

would first brief FM Yakis (he later said U/S Ziyal) and then the MFA would have to brief the new government (i.e. the Prime Minister), which would make the final decision.

17. (S/NOFORN) Burcuoglu telephoned DCM November 26 to say the GOT had approved the Codel's proposal to enter and exit northern Iraq via Turkey. However, Burcuoglu said that due to the Ramadan holiday (December 4 at 1300 through December 7), appropriate GOT officials would not be available for meetings with the Codel on December 6, as the Codel desires. (A more complete readout of Burcuoglu's response to the Codel's request will be provided septel.)

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

18. (S/NOFORN) Below is the Codel's proposed schedule per reftel:

December 3
- depart Andrews AFB in the evening

December 4
--Arrive at an air base close to the Iraqi border. (Note: We understand the Codel is looking using Mardin in south eastern Turkey. Mardin is a civilian airport with limited operating hours and capabilities. We recommend the Codel use Diyarbakir air base. It can handle military and civilian aircraft, and is not that much further from the Iraqi border than Mardin. end note.)
--Proceed to northern Iraq and travel to Salahuddin by land.
--Meeting with PUK leader Talabani, KDP leader Barzani (TBD)
--Overnight in Salahuddin

December 5

--Meeting with women's groups;
--Meeting with NGOs (re: potential humanitarian crisis in the event of an operation in Iraq);
--Speak to students at University of Irbil;
--Visit refugee camp housing;
--Interview with Brent Sadler (CNN);
--possible visit to site of chemical weapons attack.
--Depart for Turkish border (late afternoon). Cross border into Turkey, proceed to military base and fly to Ankara via military aircraft.
--Overnight in Ankara.

December 6

--meeting with GOT officials.
--Depart Ankara aboard military aircraft for Incirlik.
Receive ONW brief. Depart Incirlik en route Qatar

19. (S/NOFORN) We understand from our initial discussions with one of the DOD military escorts that the Codel is making its own transportation and security arrangements for all travel within northern Iraq. We therefore assume that Kurdish organizations in northern Iraq are aware of the visit and planning accordingly. As far as requests from the Embassy, we expect the Codel to request the following assistance: (1) securing GOT approval to enter/exit northern Iraq via Turkey; (2) securing GOT approval for right to land US military aircraft at a Turkish base; (3) US Embassy/Consulate assistance with ground transportation from the air base to the Iraqi border on December 4/from the Iraqi border to the air base on December 5; (4) hotel accommodations in Ankara for the evening of December 5; and (5) appointments with GOT officials on December 6. On this last point, the Codel has requested appointments with AK Party Chairman Erdogan or Prime Minister Gul, and TGS CHOD Gen Ozkok. For the purpose of balance and optics, we recommend that the Codel request meetings with PM Gul, FM Yakis and TGS CHOD Ozkok.

110. (S/NOFORN) If the Codel sticks with the proposed schedule outlined in para 8 above, ONW POLAD would travel via commercial air December 4 to Diyarbakir and meet the Codel upon its arrival. Codel and ONW POLAD would then drive in a lightly armored USG vehicle (provided by Consulate Adana) from that location to the Habur Gate border crossing that same day. After arriving at Habur, they would enter northern Iraq. After they complete their activities in northern Iraq, the Codel would return to the Habur Gate border crossing and reenter Turkey in the afternoon on December 5. They would

then return to Diyarbakir air base via lightly armored USG vehicle (supplied by Consulate Adana) and fly back to Ankara in the evening of December 5.

11. (S/NOFORN) We are unaware of what arrangements the Codel and the Iraqi Kurdish groups have made for the Codel's transportation within in northern Iraq. That said, we imagine the transportation and security will be similar to that which is provided to ONW POLAD when he travels to northern Iraq. Specifically, we expect the Codel would travel in northern Iraq via KDP and PUK (if the Codel enters any PUK-controlled areas) Toyota Land Cruisers, and usually be accompanied by a mid-level public affairs official from one of those factions. The KDP and PUK, respectively, would typically provide 10-20 of their best-trained peshmerga (fighters) as escorts. One or two peshmerga usually travel in USG passengers' vehicle, and all of them carry automatic weapons (usually Kalashnikovs). KDP and PUK forces also take steps to secure all roads through standard and, when necessary, additional checkpoints. KDP and PUK escorts would be in regular communication with their respective headquarters via radio and other means. The Codel would utilize local KDP, PUK and other translators as necessary.

SECURITY

12. (S/NOFORN) While northern Iraq is never completely safe for USG travel, we believe that in the current situation the ONW POLAD's presence would not increase the risk of this trip. Post defers to a USG threat assessment, but KDP and PUK authorities have in the past provided sufficient security guarantees. Post also notes that the GOT will be well aware of the Codel's activities and location while in northern Iraq and could provide both security and extraction assistance if necessary. ONW POLAD will contact Embassy Ankara daily via non-secure iridium phone, and Embassy Ankara personnel would ensure that all relevant USG agencies (including CTF/ONW, ODC, EUCOM and Washington) are kept informed. Based on information from other channels, we recommend that the Codel not meet with Islamist representatives during this trip.

13. (S/NOFORN) Embassy neither expects nor requests resources from DoD or other USG agencies for extraction contingencies for the ONW POLAD. Post is coordinating with CTF/ONW, ODC, EUCOM and State/NEA on security and safety questions for ONW POLAD. In case of emergency, POLAD would depart Iraq with the assistance of the Iraqi Kurds and, if necessary, the GOT.
PEARSON